3.3

POSITION PAPER

NATIONAL FOCUS GROUP

ON

EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The paper discusses the issues relating to the provisions, practices and curricular concerns for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Though SEN may result from a number of factors, in this paper, however, we are concerned with those arising from physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities.

Trends in provisions in India reflect that the leading policy predisposition before the 1970s has been that of segregation. During the 1880s Christian missionaries started schools for the disabled on grounds of charity. This was followed by the government initiatives to establish separate workshops, model schools, central Braille presses and employment exchanges for the disabled population of the country. However, the changing approaches to disability from the charity model to the human rights model have resulted in diversity of policy and practice. In the 1970s the IEDC scheme was launched by the Union government for providing educational opportunities to learners with SEN in regular schools. Nevertheless, the statistics show that though the integration of learners with SEN gathered some momentum, the coverage under this scheme remained inadequate. There was a clear need for fuller access of children with SEN to all educational opportunities. Dissatisfaction with the slow progress towards integration along with the consideration of the costs involved led to a demand for a radical change. After the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca in 1990s, inclusion became the magic word in the educational field. The *Salamanca Statement* adopted by representatives of 92 Governments and 25 International Organisations has, in fact, set the policy agenda for inclusive education on a global basis. Inclusive education refers to all learners, young people – with or without disabilities being able to learn together in ordinary pre-school provisions, schools and community educational settings with appropriate network of support services.

In addition to the provision of aids and appliances, a flexible, broad and balanced curriculum that can meet the needs of all children is the *call of the day*. The paper, therefore, proposes an inclusive curriculum for all students without discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnic origin, socio economic group, disability or ability. An inclusive curriculum recognises the need of schools to be organised with the individual differences of students in mind and is flexible enough to enable all students to achieve their goals. Implementation of an inclusive curriculum would require a number of changes in present day teaching practices, curriculum content, evaluation procedures and available resources at the school level. The goal of providing quality education would remain elusive so long as the concept of inclusion is not linked to broader discussions on pedagogy and effective participation of all children in the learning experiences provided in the classrooms. The implementation of a programme of inclusive education would also involve curricular modifications and the use of human and technological support, including the use of ICT. It is also important to mobilise support from parents, the community, and special schools. Considering the above context, specific recommendations have been made in the paper for developing guidelines for planning and implementing effective policies and programmes for education of children with special needs.

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CONTENTS

Education of Children with Special Needs[1]

For life to go on—change is inevitable. Change is never easy especially when it involves a large number of individuals and an established system. Yet change is necessary when innovative practices demonstrate greater effectiveness than past services.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a powerful instrument of social change, and often initiates upward movement in the social structure. Thereby, helping to bridge the gap between the different sections of society. The educational scene in the country has undergone major change over the years, resulting in better provision of education and better educational practices. In 1944, the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) published a comprehensive report called the Sergeant Report on the post-war educational development of the country. As per the report, provisions for the education of the handicapped[2], were to form an essential part of the national system of education, which was to be administered by the Education Department. According to this report, handicapped children were to be sent to special schools only when the nature and extent of their defects made this necessary. The Kothari Commission (1964–66), the first education commission of independent India, observed: "the education of the handicapped children should be an inseparable part of the education system." The comission recommended experimentation with integrated programmes in order to bring as many children as possible into these programmes (Alur, 2002).

The government's agenda to universalise elementary education, and its commitment to the Directive Principles of the Constitution, are guided by the recognition that a new universal system of education should be based on equity, the redressal of past imbalances, and the provision of access to quality education, especially for marginalised groups. Recent educational developments and the Seventy Third and Seventy Fourth Constitutional Amendments outline the possibility of entrusting basic education to the local elected bodies in towns and villages. This would allow for community participation in education at the elementary level and would introduce radical change, leading to the empowerment of learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Until the 1970s, the policy encouraged segregation. Most educators believed that children with physical, sensory, or intellectual disabilities were so different that they could not participate in the activities of a common school (Advani, 2002). Christian missionaries, in the 1880s, started schools for the disabled as charitable undertakings (Mehta, 1982). The first school for the blind was established in 1887. An institute for the deaf and mute, was set up in 1888. Services for the physically disabled were also initiated in the middle of the twentieth century. Individuals with mental retardation were the last to receive attention. The first school for the mentally challenged being established in 1934 (Mishra, 2000). Special education programmes in earlier times were, therefore, heavily dependent on voluntary initiative.

The government's (Department of Education) initiatives after independence were manifested in the establishment of a few workshop units meant primarily for blind adults (Luthra, 1974). These units later included people who were deaf, physically impaired, and mentally retarded (Rohindekar and Usha, 1988). While some provisions existed in the States, it was

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[1]   *The terms Special Needs, Special Educational Needs, and Disabilities have been used interchangeably in this position paper.*

[2]   *Wherever references are made, the terminology used is of the respective authors.*

considered the best course to assist and encourage voluntary organisations already working in the field (see the First Five Year Plan, 1951–1956 on *http: www.planning commission.hic.in/plans/planrel/five Yr/7th/vol2/7v2ch10.html*). The welfare approach continued in government programmes. Support was provided to voluntary organisations for the establishment of model schools for the blind, the deaf, and the mentally retarded. The government set up the National Library for the Blind, the Central Braille Press, and employment exchanges for the disabled. It also made provisions for scholarships, for prevention and early identification of disabling conditions, for the development of functional skills, and for aids and appliances for the disabled.

2. LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN)

In India a learner with SEN is defined variously in different documents. For example, a child with SEN in a District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) document is defined as a child with disability, namely, visual, hearing, locomotor, and intellectual (DPEP, 2001). However, the country report in the NCERT-UNESCO regional workshop report titled Assessment of needs for Inclusive Education: Report of the First Regional Workshop for SAARC Countries (2000) states that SEN goes beyond physical disability. It also refers to, …

> the large proportion of children—in the school age—belonging to the groups of child labour are, street children, victims of natural catastrophes and social conflicts, and those in extreme social and economic deprivation. These children constitute the bulk of dropouts from the school system (pg.58).

The SSA Framework for Implementation covers children with Special Needs (SN) under the section on Special Focus Groups. While separating children with disabilities from other groups like girls, Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and urban deprived children, it makes provisions for these children under the section on SEN. The Department of Education of Groups with SN in the NCERT itself, initiates programmes for meeting the learning needs of the disabled and the socially disadvantaged and marginalised, such as the SCs, STs, and minorities.

According to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-97) (UNESCO, 1997), the term Special Needs Education (SNE) means educational intervention and support designed to address SEN. The term "SNE" has come into use as a replacement for the term "Special Education". The earlier term was mainly understood to refer to the education of children with disabilities that takes place in special schools or institutions distinct from, and outside of, the institutions of the regular school and university system. In many countries today a large proportion of disabled children are in fact educated in institutions under the regular system. Moreover, the concept of children with SEN extends beyond those who may be included in handicapped categories to cover those who are failing in school, for a wide variety of reasons that are known to be likely impediments to a child's optimal progress. Whether or not this more broadly defined group of children is in need of additional support, depends on the extent to which schools need to adapt their curriculum, teaching, and organisation and/or to provide additional human or material resources so as to stimulate efficient and effective learning for these pupils.

However, only in a few instances and documents, across the various States of the country, has SEN been accepted in its broad perspective. On the whole, the focus has remained on learners with specific disabilities. This view is supported by the fact that the draft

The Gender Issue

There is ample evidence that women with disabilities experience major psycho-social problems, including depression, stress, lowered self-esteem, and social isolation, which remain largely neglected (Nosek and Hughes, 2003). Evidence also suggests that women tend to be restricted to home-based activities, while men are likely to be supported in more public and outward-looking avenues. Stereotypes are artefacts of culture that can only be understood by exploring their relations to each other in the cultural system. Gender stereotypes interact with disability stereotypes to constitute a deep matrix of gendered disability in every culture, developed within specific historical contexts, and affecting those contexts over time. While language is the most analysed site for the examination of both gender (Connell, 2002) and disability (Corker and French, 1999), they interact in many other cultural locations—cinema, television, fiction, clothing, and body language. Thus, cultures sustain the social relations of gendered disability in constant reiterations of stereotypes and expectations (Meekosha). In the education scene, discrimination on account of gender has been reported in many studies. However, girls with disabilities have remained invisible both from the writings on gender and on disability. Therefore, the needs of girls with disabilities may be more special than needs of any other group and have to be addressed in all spheres of education.

Inclusive Education Scheme (MHRD, 2003), available on the website of the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD), www.education.nic.in/html web/iedc_sch_draft.htm (accessed on February 15, 2001), which addresses the needs of learners with disabilities, focuses on the following categories of disability: visual disabilities (blind and low vision), speech and hearing disabilities, locomotor disabilities, and neuromusculoskeltal and neuro-developmental disorders, including cerebral palsy, autism, mental retardation, multiple disability, and learning disabilities. Keeping this reality in mind the main focus of this position paper is on learners with such disabilities.

3. SHIFTING MODELS OF DISABILITY: HISTORICAL PROGRESSION

The shifting approaches to disability have translated into very diverse policies and practices. The various models of disability impose differing responsibilities on the States, in terms of action to be taken, and they suggest significant changes in the way disability is understood. Law, policy, programmes, and rights instruments reflect two primary approaches or discourses: disability as an individual pathology and as a social pathology.

Within these two overriding paradigms, the four major identifiable formulations of disability are: the charity model, the bio-centric model, the functional model, and the human rights model.

3.1 The Charity Model

The charity approach gave birth to a model of custodial care, causing extreme isolation and the marginalisation of people with disabilities. Unfortunately, in some contemporary practices the reflection of this model can still be traced. For instance, the findings of an investigative project undertaken by the National Human

Rights Commission of India between 1997–99 confirmed that a large number of mental health institutions today are still being managed and administered on the custodial model of care—characterised by prison-like structures with high walls, watchtowers, fenced wards, and locked cells. These institutions functioned like detention centres, where persons with mental illness were kept chained, resulting in tragedies like the one at "Erwadi" in Tamil Nadu, in which more than 27 inmates of such a centre lost their lives.

3.2 The Bio-centric Model

The contemporary bio-centric model of disability regards disability as a medical or genetic condition. The implication remains that disabled persons and their families should strive for "normalisation", through medical cures and miracles. Although, biology is no longer the only lens through which disability is viewed in law and policy, it continues to play a prominent role in determining programme eligibility, entitlement to benefits, and it also influences access to rights and full social participation (Mohit, 2003).

A critical analysis of the development of the charity and bio-centric models suggests that they have grown out of the "vested interests" of professionals and the elite to keep the disabled "not educable" or declare them mentally retarded (MR) children and keep them out of the mainstream school system, thus using the special schools as a "safety valve" for mainstream schools (Tomlinson, 1982). Inclusive education offers an opportunity to restructure the entire school system, with particular reference to the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and above all the meaning of education (Jha, 2002).

3.3 The Functional Model

In the functional model, entitlement to rights is differentiated according to judgments of individual incapacity and the extent to which a person is perceived as being independent to exercise his/her rights. For example, a child's right to education is dependent on whether or not the child can access the school and participate in the classroom, rather than the obligation being on the school system becoming accessible to children with disabilities.

3.4 The Human Rights Model

The human rights model positions disability as an important dimension of human culture, and it affirms that all human beings are born with certain inalienable rights. The relevant concepts in this model are:

3.4.1 Diversity

The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, once said that "things that are alike should be treated alike, whereas things that are unalike should be treated unalike in proportion to their un-alikeness." The principle of respect for difference and acceptance of disability as part of human diversity and humanity is important, as disability is a universal feature of the human condition.

3.4.2 Breaking Down Barriers

Policies that are ideologically based on the human rights model start by identifying barriers that restrict disabled persons' participation in society. This has shifted the focus in the way environments are arranged. In education, for example, where individuals were formerly labelled as not educable, the human rights model examines the accessibility of schools in terms of both physical access (i.e., ramps, etc.) and pedagogical strategies.

3.4.3 Equality and Non-Discrimination

In international human rights law, equality is founded upon two complementary principles: non-discrimination and reasonable differentiation. The doctrine of differentiation is of particular importance to persons with disabilities, some of who may require specialised services or support in order to be placed

on a basis of equality with others. Differences of treatment between individuals are not discriminatory if they are based on "reasonable and objective justification". Moreover, equality not only implies preventing discrimination (for example, the protection of individuals against unfavourable treatment by introducing anti-discrimination laws), but goes far beyond, in remedying discrimination. In concrete terms, it means embracing the notion of positive rights, affirmative action, and reasonable accommodation.

3.4.4 Reasonable Accommodation

It is important to recognise that reasonable accommodation is a means by which conditions for equal participation can be achieved, nd it requires the burden of accommodation to be in proportion to the capacity of the entity. In the draft *Comprehensive and Integral and International Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities*, "reasonable accommodation" has been defined as the "introduction of necessary and appropriate measures to enable a person with a disability fully to enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms and to have access without prejudice to all structures, processes, public services, goods, information, and other systems."

3.4.5 Accessibility

The United Nations Economic and Special Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) has defined "accessibility" as "the measure or condition of things and services that can readily be reached or used (at the physical, visual, auditory and/or cognitive levels) by people including those with disabilities"(Rioux and Mohit, 2005).

3.4.6 Equal Participation and Inclusion

By focussing on the inherent dignity of the human being, the human rights model places the individual at centre stage, in all decisions affecting him/her. Thus,

the human rights model, respects the autonomy and freedom of choice of the disabled, and also ensures that they, themselves, prioritise the criteria for support programmes.

It requires that people with disabilities, and other individuals and institutions fundamental to society, are enabled to gain the capacity for the free interaction and participation vital to an inclusive society.

3.4.7 Private and Public Freedoms

The human rights approach to disability on the one hand requires that the States play an active role in enhancing the level of access to public freedoms, and on the other requires that the enjoyment of rights by persons with disabilities is not hampered by third-party actors in the private sphere. Educational institutions and industry, both in the public and private sectors, should ensure equitable treatment to persons with disabilities.

4. EDUCATIONAL PROVISIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

4.1 Integrated Education

In the 1970s, the government launched the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC). The scheme aimed at providing educational opportunities to learners with disabilities in regular schools, and to facilitate their achievement and retention. The objective was to integrate children with disabilities in the general community at all levels as equal partners to prepare them for normal development and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence. A cardinal feature of the scheme was the liaison between regular and special schools to reinforce the integration process.

Meanwhile, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) joined hands with UNICEF and launched Project Integrated Education for

Disabled Children (PIED) in the year 1987, to strengthen the integration of learners with disabilities into regular schools. An external evaluation of this project in 1994 showed that not only did the enrollment of learners with disabilities increase considerably, but the retention rate among disabled children was also much higher than the other children in the same blocks. In 1997 IEDC was amalgamated with other major basic education projects like the DPEP (Chadha, 2002) and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) (Department of Elementary Education, 2000).

The IEDC scheme provides for a wide range of incentives and interventions for the education of children with disabilities. These include preschool training, counselling for parents, allowances for books and stationery, uniforms, transport, readers and escorts, hostel facilities, and other assistive devices. The scheme provides one special teacher for every eight children with disabilities, community involvement, and a resource room in a cluster of eight to 10 schools. A number of voluntary organisations are implementing the scheme in the various States.

**Table 1: Enrollment of Disabled Children in Schools Under
The Integrated Educational Programme (Stage: Primary)**

| Area | Management | Type of Disability | | | | | |
		Visual Impairment	Hearing Impairment	Orthop-aedic Handicaps	Mental Retard-ation	Others	Total
Rural	Govt	1539	1307	15168	1066	2070	21150
	Non-Govt	391	354	2189	188	80	3202
	Total	1930	1661	17357	1254	1250	24352
Urban	Govt.	896	1420	5072	1694	1382	10464
	Non-Govt.	982	1877	3959	800	1538	9156
	Total	1878	3297	9031	2494	2920	19620
Total	Govt.	2435	2727	20240	2760	3452	31614
	Non-Govt	1373	2231	6148	988	1618	12358
	Total	3808	4958	26388	3748	5070	43972

Note: Govt includes the Central Government and the State Governments as also Local Bodies and Non-Govt includes Pvt. Aided and Pvt. Unaided.

Source: NCERT, 1998

**Table 2: Enrollment of Disabled Children in Schools Under
the Integrated Educational Programme (Stage: Upper Primary)**

| Area | Management | Type of Disability | | | | | |
		Visual Impair-ment	Hearing Impair-ment	Orthopaedic Handicaps	Mentally Retard-ation	Others	Total
Rural	Govt.	996	533	6734	369	926	9558
	Non-Govt.	262	264	1582	67	141	2316
	Total	1258	797	8316	436	1067	11874
Urban	Govt.	604	904	3781	271	251	5811
	Non-Govt.	736	581	2293	572	1467	5649
	Total	1340	1485	6074	843	1718	11460
Total	Govt.	1600	1437	10515	640	1177	15369
	Non-Govt.	998	845	3875	639	1608	7965
	Total	2598	2282	14390	1279	2785	23334

Note: Govt. includes the Central Government and the State Governments as also Local Bodies
and Non-Govt. includes Pvt. Aided and Pvt. Unaided.

Source: NCERT, 1998

As evident from the tables above, until 1998, integrated education was provided to 8,90,000 learners in different States till the senior secondary level (NCERT, 1998). By the year 2002, the scheme had extended to 41,875 schools, benefitting more than 1,33,000 disabled children in 27 States and four Union Territories (Department of Education, MHRD, 2003). The total number of learners with SEN enrolled in regular schools under DPEP was more than 5,60,000: this represents almost 70% of the nearly 8,10,000 learners with SEN identified under this programme (DPEP, 2003).

The current enrollment ratio per 1000 disabled persons between the ages of 5–18 years in ordinary schools is higher in the rural areas (475) than it is in the urban areas (444). [National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), 2002]. The Office of the Chief Commissioner of Persons with Disabilities stated that not more than 4% of children with disabilities have access to education. Whatever may be the case, the enactment of legislations by the State Governments has helped in facilitating access to education for all learners with SEN by introducing various entitlements like reservations, scholarships, allowances, etc. By promulgating the equal rights of learners with SEN, these Acts have significantly impacted the educational policies both at the Central and State levels, but the effect has been marginal.

About 11% of disabled persons between the ages of 5–18 years were enrolled in special schools in the

urban areas as compared to less than 1% in the rural areas (NSSO, 2002). This clearly indicates that the presence of special schools in a parallel stream does effect the enrollment of children with disabilities in regular schools. Criticising the segregation policies of the Indian government, Baquer and Sharma (1997) have pointed out that:

> …separate special education systems lead to social segregation and isolation of the disabled, thus creating separate worlds for them in adult life. Inclusive education has the potential to lay the foundation of a more inclusive society where being "different" is accepted, respected and valued. The school is the first opportunity to start this desirable and yet difficult process. It is difficult because it is wrought with fears and apprehensions on the part of parents, teachers, and other children.

Despite the efforts of governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), there is still a significant need to facilitate access of disabled children to educational institutions and to education in general.

The first and foremost strategy for any country, and especially India, must be therefore to increase the access to education for learners with SEN. Though awareness is being created by the inclusion of learners with SEN in major educational programmes like the DPEP and now the SSA, most of them address SEN as a segregated issue rather than as one that runs through all initiatives. This is supported by the fact that under the SSA, training, linkages with parents, salaries of special educators, aids and appliances, etc. are all provided through the separate provision of Rs 1200 per disabled child per annum. The total money available for such services thus depends on the number of disabled children identified. In addition, access to curriculum and physical access to the school are also issues that need to be addressed immediately.

Figure 1 depicts some of the popular models of Integrated Education being practised in India
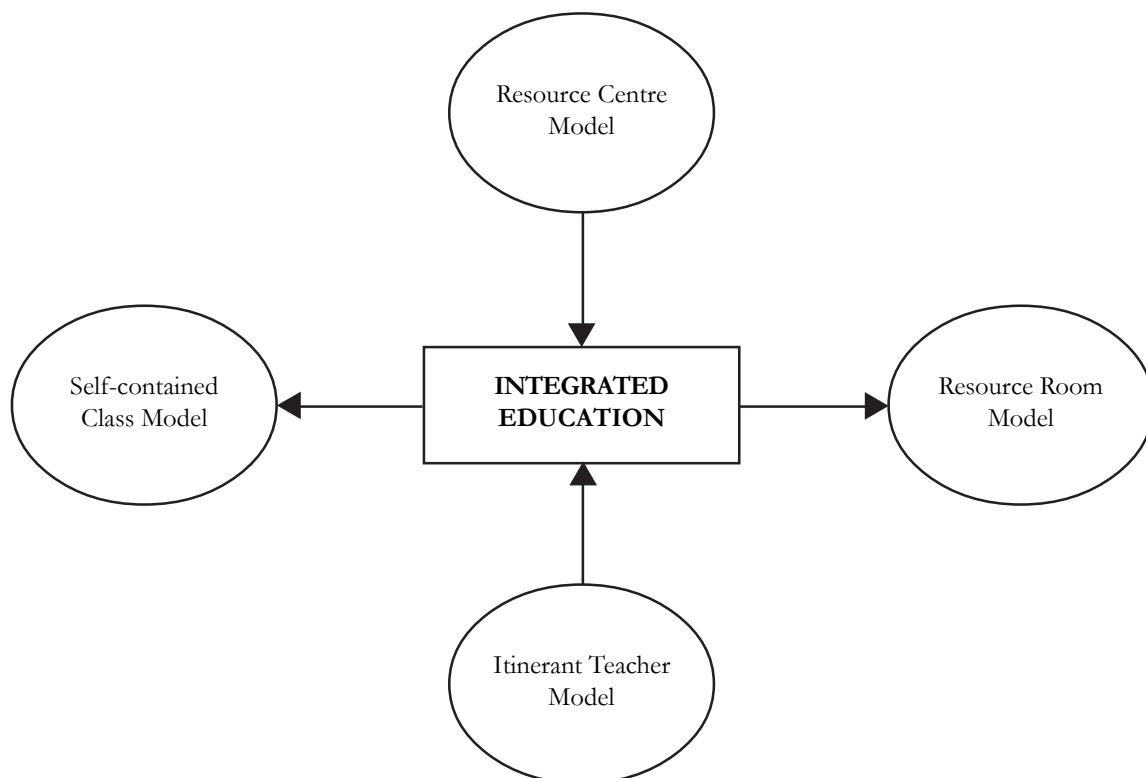
Though the integration of children with SEN has gathered momentum in the country since 1974, there are other possibilities for these children to gain an education. For example, the National Institute of Open Schooling offers courses that have the advantage of being specially adapted to the needs of every child as well as giving the child every opportunity to progress at his/her own pace. Another example is Alternative Schooling (Advani, 2002) and community-based rehabilitation programmes.

It is believed that the fundamental right to education will bring more students with SEN into ordinary schools, which will in turn provide an impetus for change and bring about a number of innovations in the field of SNE.

4.2 Legislation

The right of every child to education is proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and was strongly reaffirmed by the Jometien World Declaration of Education for All (1990). Furthermore, the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) was an important resolution to improve the educational conditions of persons with disabilities. This had major implications for the Indian situation in the form of three legislative Acts—The Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992 (RCI Act), the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 (PWD Act), and the National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999. While the RCI Act was solely concerned with manpower development for the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, the PWD Act comprises 14 chapters and is a significant endeavour to empower persons with disabilities and promote their equality and participation by eliminating discrimination of all kinds. It emphasises the need to prepare a comprehensive education scheme that will make various provisions for transport facilities, removal of architectural barriers, supply of books, uniforms, and other materials, the grant of scholarships, suitable modification of the examination system, restructuring of curriculum, providing amanuensis to blind and low vision students, and setting up of appropriate fora for the redressal of grievances. The National Trust Act aims at providing total care to persons with mental retardation and cerebral palsy and also manages the properties bequeathed to the trust.

4.3 Changing Role of Special Schools

Special schools have been set up in the past and provisions have been made for integrated education. In 1947, India had a total of 32 such schools for the blind, 30 for the deaf, and three for the mentally retarded (Disability in India: www.ccdisabilities.nic.in). The number of such schools increased to around 3000 by the year 2000 (NCERT-UNESCO Regional Workshop Report, 2000). Thus India at present has what Pijl and Meijer (1991) refer to as "two tracks". In other words, it has parallel but separate policies on segregation and integration.

Special schools for children with visual impairment, hearing impairment, and locomotor disabilities are streamlined to follow a curriculum that is almost in line with the general education curriculum. The plus curriculum and the adaptation of instructional methodologies are followed where necessary. Children with mental retardation on the other hand require a specialised curriculum to meet their specific educational needs.

Over time, however, there has been growing awareness that special education in special schools may

be overly restrictive, and instead of working outside the mainstream classrooms, the special schools can work with, and provide support to, regular schools. Early in 1992, the Programme of Action, while promoting integrated education, had also suggested a Pragmatic Placement Principle. It postulated that learners with disabilities who can be educated in general schools should be educated in general schools, and those studying in special schools should be transferred to general schools once they are ready to make the shift (MHRD, Programme of Action, 1992). This was endorsed in 1994 by the Salamanca Statement (statement issued by the World Conference on Special Needs Education) recommendations for an alternative role for special schools. Hence, special schools in their newfound identity would become a far more flexible resource, by working in partnership with and creating a response to special needs, not only in the alternative form of provision and intervention, but within the mainstream classroom, curricula, and pedagogies. Special and general education, in other words, are gearing for a significant move to come closer together.

Briefly stated, the education of persons with disabilities in India has been recognised as an integral part of the educational system, hence, the policies and programmes adopted in recent years have been in accordance with this belief.

4.4 Inclusive Education

The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) (2000), brought out by the NCERT, recommended inclusive schools for all without specific reference to pupils with SEN as a way of providing quality education to all learners According to NCFSE:

> Segregation or isolation is good neither for learners with disabilities nor for general learners without disabilities. Societal requirement is that learners with special needs should be educated along with other learners in inclusive schools, which are cost effective and have sound pedagogical practices (NCERT, 2000)

The NCFSE also recommended definitive action at the level of curriculum makers, teachers, writers of teaching–learning materials, and evaluation experts for the success of this strategy. This precipitated a revision of the IEDC scheme. This revision is in progress and has, to a certain extent, gained ground in the country.

Internationally, until the end of 1980s, integration remained the main issue whenever discussions were held regarding the rights of disabled persons to an appropriate education. Whereas, in India, integration was a major reform of the 1970s, the need for inclusive education became evident from the fact that despite complete financial support under the IEDC scheme, for integrating learners with special needs into the educational system, only 2–3% of the total population of these learners was actually integrated into the regular schools. Dissatisfaction with the progress towards integration, consideration of costs involved, and the advantages of an inclusive environment in bringing about increased acceptance of learners with SEN, led to demands for more radical change. The constant use of the medical model of assessment, wherein educational difficulties are explained solely in terms of defects in the child, led to a re-conceptualisation of the special needs (SN) task as requiring school reforms and improved pedagogy. This re-conceptualisation at the both the international and national level helped in the emergence of an orientation towards inclusive education. In the 1990s, inclusion captured the field after the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca in 1994, with the adoption of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. This statement, which was adopted by the representatives of 92 governments and

25 international organisations in June 1994, has definitely set the policy agenda for inclusive education on a global basis (UNESCO, 1994). To quote from the Salamanca Statement:

> We the delegates of the World Conference on Special Needs Education…hereby reaffirm our commitment to Education for All, recognising the necessity and urgency of providing education to children, youth, and adults with SEN within the regular education system, and further hereby endorse the Framework for Action on SNE, that governments and organisations may be guided by the spirit of its provisions and recommendations (UNESCO, 1994: 8)

Though, in India, there is no formal or official definition of inclusion, it does not only mean the placement of students with SEN in regular classrooms. The Draft Scheme on Inclusive Education prepared by the MHRD (2003) uses the following definition:

> Inclusive education means all learners, young people—with or without disabilities being able to learn together in ordinary preschool provisions, schools, and community educational settings with appropriate network of support services (Draft of Inclusive Education Scheme, MHRD, 2003) .

Inclusion means the process of educating children with SEN alongside their peers in mainstream schools. The feasibility of inclusion of such children in schools, however, has been an issue that has been discussed and debated extensively at various national and international fora.

> Inclusion remains a complex and controversial issue which tends to generate heated debates… there is a great deal of uncertainty about the definition of inclusion… it is difficult to find research evidence that can provide definitive guidance as to where policy and practice should be heading…. In this

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Inclusive Preschool !

School A is from Nursery to Class X, with two to three sections per class. It has about 800 students. It employs both English and Hindi as the medium of instruction and has a maximum of 30 students per class.

If you visit the nursery school, you will find children playing, learning, and having fun. You will observe children with SEN in each class. The SEN are because of intellectual, hearing, and vision impairments and neuromuscular and attention deficits disorders. But they are so well integrated in the group that one cannot identify them from the rest. If you talk to the teacher about inclusion of such children in the class, you will hear her say that they are like any other children. How has this happened?

This has happened very naturally. For example, when a teacher spotted a child not singing along with other children, she asked the child to stand next to her and repeat the rhyme along with her, while she prompted him. By a happy coincidence, the student trainees of the Diploma in Early Childhood Education were carrying out teaching practice at that very school. The trainees discussed the strategies that could be adopted for enhancing the participation of children in learning process, and the teachers' realised the relevance of these strategies in the education of children with SEN and incorporated them in their own practice. Thus, they began using three-dimensional teaching–learning materials, masks, and puppets for storytelling, using classmates as a peer tutors during rhymes, games, and the like. This new approach proved a rewarding experience and promoted close bonding among the students in each class.

By virtue of this experience, the school has adopted an open policy for admissions to its Nursery class. The teachers have no hesitation in accepting children with SEN, and the peer group readily welcomes them.

climate some schools express increasing reluctance to admit and retain pupils whose presence could have a negative impact on their overall profile of results…there is a growing movement in education towards differentiated provision—a trend that seems incompatible with an inclusive philosophy (Farrell and Ainscow, 2002).

4.5 Benefits of Inclusion for Students without Special Needs[3]

The benefits of inclusion for students with SEN are as follows:

- Spending the school day alongside classmates who do not have disabilities provides many opportunities for social interaction that would not be available in segregated settings.
- Children with SEN have appropriate models of behaviour. They can observe and imitate the socially acceptable behaviour of the students without SEN.
- Teachers often develop higher standards of performance for students with SEN.
- Both general and special educators in inclusive settings expect appropriate conduct from all students.
- Students with SEN are taught age-appropriate, functional components of academic content, which may never be part of the curriculum in segregated settings (for example, the sciences, social studies, etc.).
- Attending inclusive schools increases the probability that students with SEN will continue to participate in a variety of integrated settings throughout their lives (Ryndak and Alper, 1996).

4.6 Benefits of Inclusion for Students without SEN

The benefits of inclusion for students without SEN are as follows:

- Students without SEN have a variety of opportunities for interacting with peers of their own age who experience SEN, in inclusive school settings.
- They may serve as peer tutors during instructional activities.
- They may play the role of a special "buddy" for the children with SEN during lunch, in the bus, or on the playground.
- Children without SEN can learn a good deal about tolerance, individual difference, and human exceptionality by interacting with those with SEN.
- Children without SEN can learn that students with SEN have many positive characteristics and abilities.
- Children without SEN have the chance to learn about many of the human service professions, such as, special education, speech therapy, physical therapy, recreational therapy, and vocational rehabilitation. For some, exposure to these areas may lead their making a career in any of these areas later on.
- Inclusion offers the opportunity for students without SEN to learn to communicate, and deal effectively with a wide range of individuals. This also prepares them to fully participate in a pluralistic society when they are adults (Ryndak and Alper, 1996).

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[3]*Renaissance Group (1999) http://www.uni.edu/coe/inclusion and http://www.rushservices.com/inclusion*

- Inclusive education ensures that a school responds to the educational needs of children in the neighbourhood. It brings a school closer to the community (Jha, 2002).

5. CURRICULAR ISSUES AND CONCERNS

To make inclusive education possible, and to better accommodate students with different learning abilities, the present education system, educational structure, and educational practices need to become more flexible, more inclusive, and more collaborative.

5.1 The Purpose
The purpose of inclusive education,

- Is NOT the same as for a student without SEN—that is, it IS NOT to bring students with SEN up to the level of, or maintain their grades at the same level as, students without SEN.
- It IS to meet the individualised goals of students with SEN, within the context of general educational settings and activities.

The following questions need to be addressed while making adaptations to the curriculum.

Can a student with SEN participate in the classroom

- Just like his/her classmates?
- With environmental adaptations?
- With instructional adaptations?
- With adapted materials?
- With adapted expectations?

5.2 Early Intervention and Preschool Programme for Children with SEN
The identification of SEN of children at an early age is crucial to helping them cope with challenges in later life. Thus, the sensitisation, orientation, and training

Emerging Issues and Curricular Concerns

The following curricular issues and concerns have emerged within the Focus Group as a result of in-depth discussion and analysis of the existing scenario.

- Making all options of education, such as, open schools, regular schools, special schools, non-formal and alternative education systems, available to all children including children with disabilities.
- Developing strategies for meeting the educational needs of learners with disabilities in large classrooms.
- Developing national support systems.
- Understanding the significance of early identification and intervention.
- Emphasising good teaching–learning practices.
- Making the curriculum flexible and accessible.
- Utilising technology and assistive devices.
- Developing appropriate assessment and evaluation procedures.
- Capacity building and empowering teachers and stakeholders.
- Providing vocational education.
- Identifying suitable sports and other co-curricular activities for optimal development of learners with SEN.
- Barrier-free intervention/educational environment (including attitudinal barriers).

of parents, caretakers, and other stakeholders becomes imperative. As per the NSSO (2003), 8.4% and 6.1% of the total estimated households in rural and urban India, respectively, are reported to have at least one disabled person. Therefore, orienting Anganwadi and Balwadi workers, caregivers, and institutional authorities in early childhood education programmes is highly desirable and needs to be built into the ICDS programme.

The provision of resources and the involvement of the community in identification and intervention in the child's own milieu need emphasis and focus. The benefits of existing knowledge and skills in conjunction with technology can be made to reach the needy through the involvement of local bodies. For example, the Ali Yavar Jung National Institute for Hearing Handicapped (AYJNIHH) has played the role of a catalyst at Badlapur Kulgaon Nagar Palika where the Town Panchayat has resolved to collect Rs 10 per property per year to help persons with disabilities. As a result, the Town Panchayat collects about Rs 2,25,000 per year through its 22,500 properties. An Apang Samiti, consisting of Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) schools, banks, station masters, post masters, etc. was formed which decides the priorities of the PWDs, including Children with SEN. Empowering the Town Panchayat through a catalyst can be critical for the success of the Early Identification and Intervention Programme. A strong parent/caregiver professional partnership should be developed for the networking and strengthening of intervention programmes.

At the preschool level, a multisensory approach should replace oral and rote learning, facilitate language learning, develop pre-academic skills, and provide for remedial measures in all areas of development. Appropriate diagnostic and remedial assessment should be made available to identify, "at risk" children.

Already developed curriculum packages (Mohite, 1994) for preschool children in communication skills, self-help skills, social skills, and specific motor skills may be used. Audio-visual packages for promoting skills in physical, motor, affective, cognitive, and language development of children "at risk" and with SEN may be utilised.

5.3 Planning and Managing an Inclusive Curriculum in Schools

Developing inclusive schools that cater to a wide range of pupils in both urban and rural areas requires: the articulation of a clear and forceful policy on inclusion together with adequate financial provision; an effective public information effort to combat prejudice and create informed and positive attitudes; an extensive programme of orientation and staff training; and the provision of necessary support services. Changes in all the following aspects of schooling, as well as many others, are necessary to contribute to the success of inclusive schools: curriculum, buildings, school organisation, pedagogy, assessment, staffing, school ethos, and extracurricular activities [UNESCO, 1994: 21 (The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education)].

An inclusive curriculum means one curriculum for all students rather than a separate curriculum for students without SEN and another for students with SEN. According to Quinn and Ryba (2000) an inclusive curriculum is recognition that under the principle of social justice, participation in education should not involve discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity, indigenous group, socio-economic status, and ability or disability. An inclusive curriculum, recognises the need that schools be organised, with the individual differences of students in mind and allow for scope and flexibility to enable all students to achieve their goals.

Though the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) (2000) (NCERT, 2000), does mention the education of learners with SEN under the sections "Curriculum Concerns" and "Managing the System", it does not address the SEN of learners under various other sections, such as, "Organisation of Curriculum at Elementary and Secondary Stages", "Organisation of Curriculum at Higher Secondary Stage", "Evaluation", etc.

As stated by Loreman and Deppeler (2001),

> Educators are misinformed and confused about inclusion… We believe that inclusion, by its very nature, cannot exist in environments where some children are educated separately or substantively differently to their peers. It is perhaps easier to provide examples of what is not inclusion. Educating children part time in special schools and part time in regular schools is not inclusion. Educating children in special, mostly segregated, environments in regular schools is not inclusion. Educating children in regular classes, but requiring them to follow substantially different courses of study in terms of content and learning environment to their peers, is also not inclusion (unless all children in a class follow individual programmes).
>
> Inclusion means full inclusion of children with diverse abilities in all aspects of schooling that other children are able to access and enjoy. It involves regular schools and classrooms genuinely adapting and changing to meet the needs of all children, as well as celebrating and valuing differences. This definition of inclusion does not imply that children with diverse abilities will not receive specialised assistance or teaching outside of the classroom when required, but rather that this is just one of many options that are available to, and in fact required of, all children.

5.4 Access to an Inclusive Curriculum

Booth (2000) has pointed out that access to education is only the first stage in overcoming the exclusion of persons with disabilities from the mainstream. More challenging is the task of bringing about a shift in public perspective and values, so that diversity is cherished.

However, it is difficult to say whether the first barrier has as yet been overcome in our country.

It is believed that the fundamental right to education will bring more pupils with SEN into ordinary schools, and that this will provide the impetus for change. As stated this will regime a number of innovations in teaching–learning processes, and will also provide pupils with SEN access to a full curriculum in appropriate ways. To facilitate this access, it is important to provide information in Braille, on tape, through sign language, and in simple and straightforward language. Access to the content of the curriculum is further highlighted later in this paper.

5.5 Teaching Practices

In India, the concept of Inclusive Education has not yet been linked to a broader discussion of pedagogy (Anita, 2000) and quality education (Taneja, 2001). Any broad reform in education cannot be implemented without taking the inclusion of learners with SEN into consideration.

In a study on practitioners' perspectives in some inclusive schools carried out by Singhal and Rouse (2003), many teachers who were interviewed stated that:

> …there have been no changes in their teaching. Some justified this status quo by stating that the included children do not have less IQ, hence they can fit into the existing classroom procedures. Teachers also argued that many existing constraints did not allow them to make significant changes in their practices. These constraints included large class sizes, task of maintaining discipline—hallmark of a good teacher, vast amount of syllabus, and the fact that the included student was just one of many in class.

However, there are many teachers all over the country who do make small modifications in their teaching in accordance with the principles of inclusive education. The strategies used by them are: group learning, peer tutoring, speaking slowly and clearly,

Inclusive Primary School

School B, is a neighbourhood school, serving children of daily-wage employees residing in the slum areas of a city. The school was established by a well-wisher, who is a teacher living in the same neighbourhood. This teacher wanted to achieve the goal of "education for all". She believed that no child should be excluded from school. When challenges were seen in accommodating children with SEN because of large class enrollments and limited resources, she sought support from special education specialists. Technical support was extended for assessment, educational programming, adapting teaching methods, and Teaching–Learning Materials (TLM), for including children appropriately [from Upper Kindergarten (UKG) to Class III]. It was necessary to interact with parents on a weekly basis in the school, and ensure support for transferring learning to home conditions. Worksheets, teaching materials, and simplified techniques using practical methods were introduced. After providing constant support for six months through teacher trainees placed in the school, it was rewarding to see parents start to attend meetings regularly and ask for clarifications about helping the child at home and actively supporting the child in completing home tasks. Simultaneously, teachers expressed satisfaction at the children's performance at school and found parents motivated in reporting children's progress at home tasks such as completing homework. This exercise enabled parents and teachers to realise the importance of closer collaboration and its benefits in monitoring the child's performance in academics by using simple teaching materials and practical methods for teaching functional academics in primary classes, thus leading to the inclusion of children with SN. The teachers reported that the literature and manuals developed by experts, such as, the resource book for teachers on educating children with learning problems in primary schools, functional academics for students with mental retardation, the inclusive preschool package, and the school's readiness to accept children with SN, were very useful in gaining the knowledge and skills to teach these children.

looking at the hearing-impaired child while speaking so that they can lip read, writing on the blackboard, etc. Most teachers are aware of such techniques for classroom management of learners with SEN. In this connection, they often consult the special educator for support.

An extensive review of research on learner and teacher characteristics (Cronbach and Snow, 1977), concluded that children with difficulties in learning need a mixture of teaching approaches with a bias towards fairly structured methods. Krishnaswamy and Shankar (2003), point towards differentiated instruction as an approach for the teacher to weave individual goals into the classroom content and instructional strategies. Valmiki (2003) emphasises culture specific pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching as major initiatives

in making education culturally inclusive. Mani and Mulharah (2003) have talked about creating effective classrooms through cooperative learning. According to Malhotra (2003) teachers should be provided flexible syllabi, which would give them more time and freedom.

Work over the last decade has endeavoured to identify specific sub-groups of specific learning difficulties, and there is evidence that it may be valid to distinguish between children with language, visual-spatial, or "mixed processing deficits" (Tyler 1990). However, even if we could make these kinds of distinctions with certainty, there remains the question of how best one can teach these various groups of children. As yet there are no unequivocally "best" methods. Careful monitoring of the child's learning and the encouragement of a broad range of learning strategies remain important characteristics of effective teaching for all children. Lewis (1991) has stated: "In teaching, effective teachers adjust their styles to individual learners." She highlighted the importance of focusing on topics, which match the child's interest level for planning parallel tasks of similar difficulty for different interests (for example, matching teacher's questions with children's cognition levels), varying the presentation of activity, and varying children's modes of responses (for example, oral instead of written). Evans (1997), giving a description of the theoretical elements and assumptions related to structuring the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties points out that since learning is a social process and involves the structuring of knowledge, it calls for the teacher's mediation between the child and the environment. He goes further to state:

> The child's education cannot be achieved through only one teacher but must reflect a whole school approach in which all members of the staff are involved in the development of agreed goal-directed, problem-solving strategies. In order for this to work, there needs to be a structuring of this whole environmental system, that is, through the development of the curriculum, its pedagogy, and its organisation. In this way children's special learning needs can in principle be met.

5.6 Content Areas

The goals of education are the same for all children provided that these goals are balanced and brought in harmony with the individual needs of each child. Applebee (1998) stresses the importance of instituting conversational domains in planning curricula. According to him:

> In schools these domains have been pre-established and take the form of disciplines such as language, mathematics, social studies, and science. A more appropriate emphasis might be domains that are culturally specific and imbue a natural facilitation for conversation centred around "living traditions". In order to accomplish this end, participation is key and students are actually "doing" science or social studies instead of simply reading or being told about [them].

Singh (2001) reported differences in the educational needs of children with SEN. She found that all the stakeholders, including children with SEN, opined that the curricula followed were not relevant. There was repetition in the content of the sciences, social sciences, and general knowledge. The excessive textual burden and the bulk of exercises in most of the subjects were also found to be irrelevant. The components of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities, such as, games and sports, drawing and painting, craft and cultural activities should be an essential part of the curriculum.

The SEN may emanate from a number of reasons. In this paper we concentrate on SEN stemming from disability conditions. Not all children with disabilities have SEN at the elementary level. They learn along with their peers with the help of aids such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, optical or non-optical aids, educational aids like Taylor frames, the abacus, etc. However, there may be students who may require the following:

- Additional time and a suitable mode for the successful completion of tests.
- Modification, substitution, and disapplication of the curriculum because it presents specific difficulties for them.
- Provision of adapted, modified, or alternative activities in different content areas.
- Accessible texts and materials to suit their ages and levels of learning;
- Appropriate management of classrooms (for example, management of noise, glare, etc.)
- Provision of additional support by using ICT or video.

As mentioned earlier, inclusion is all about providing effective learning opportunities to all students. Therefore, it depends on whether teachers modify the National Curriculum programmes of study whenever necessary in order to provide relevant and challenging work to students. It means being flexible and choosing content from a lower level or higher level if necessary. There may be students who may perform below the expected level. For these students a greater degree of differentiation may be necessary. On the other hand, students whose performances exceed those of others within one or more subjects may need suitably challenging work. What is important is that no matter how they learn or perform, they should experience success and not failure.

Many suggestions in different domain areas were given when interviewing teachers teaching in classrooms where children with SEN were studying along with other children. They have been broadly summarised as follows:

5.6.1 Mathematics

To overcome access difficulties to learning mathematics, some pupils may require help in interpreting the data in graphs, tables, or bar charts. Some may require access to tactile, and others to specialist, equipment for work related to shape, geometry, calculations, etc. They may also require more time to complete their work. There may be some who may require simpler language or more pictures. There may be children who may need help in interpreting oral directions, while making mental calculations. Use of ICT may be required to overcome difficulties in quantitative and abstract thinking.

5.6.2 Language

Some pupils may have specific difficulties in learning languages and may require help in improving their areas of weaknesses and in devising strategies to overcome their difficulties. There may be some children who may require alternative communication systems to compensate for the difficulties hey face in using spoken language. Lele and Khaledkar (1994) found that children having problems in hearing had difficulty in language comprehension when instructed with the language textbook prescribed for the general class. These children with special needs required a greater number of periods to learn the content. Paranjpe (1996) reported significant differences in achievement of language skills between children with and without hearing impairment, the former being deficient in language skills. Children having difficulties in writing may need to make use of ICT, while there may be some who may require opportunities to learn and develop a tactile method of interpreting written information. Content related to real-life situations would benefit all children.

Remedial programmes in language would be effective in improving the reading comprehension of all children including those having reading disorders (Umadevi, 1997). The use of computer-based remedial strategies have been reported as having yielded a 5% improvement in the performance of children with specific learning disabilities in Mathematics and a 7% improvement in English (Bose, 1996).

Sign language and Braille may find a place in the three language formula in school education, and this would not only help students with SEN in language learning, but also create awareness and sensitivity amongst children without SEN.

5.6.3   Science

In learning science, some students may require support with mobility or manipulation skills to participate in experiments being performed both indoors and outdoors. Students can benefit from adapted or alternative activities, adapted equipment, the use of ICT, adult or peer support, additional time, and support in lessons that may not be accessible to them because of their impairment.

5.6.4   Social Studies

In order to gain access to this subject, some students may require support in the form of prepared tapes to access text; help in writing to communicate their ideas through alternative communication methods such as ICT or speech; adaptation of content and activities; education aids to manage visual information; and/or support to understand various geographical concepts and features and the environment.

Group activities such as projects and assignments done through cooperative learning will enable students with SEN to participate actively in all classroom activities.

5.6.5   Art, Craft and Music

Art is a very effective medium of self-expression and communication. It provides a number of media such as dance, drama, music, painting, sculpture, carving, puppetry, etc. for self-expression and communication with the world, and helps in developing self-confidence and self-worth in learners. Art classes may also encourage many students to take up this creative mode of self-expression as their profession in future life. For students with SEN, art education also acts as a healthy

leisure activity. To gain access to these areas students may require alternative activities/opportunities, additional time, etc.

5.6.6   Health, Hygiene, Yoga, Sports and Physical Education

These curricular components are important for students with SEN and improve the following:

- Personal health and physical development
- Movement concepts and motor skills
- Mental health including peace
- Relationships with other people

Studies and experiments (Dash, 1997) have indicated that most of the children with disabilities can play a number of games without any support or special effort. Little effort is needed to make the games adapted to children with visual and multiple disabilities. Krejci (1998) reported that children with orthopaedic disabilities could also do the *yogasans* (yogic postures/ exercises. Available research evidence also reveals that music, dance, and yogasans have a therapeutic effect on children with mental retardation, and have helped improve their attention and concentration Thakur Hari Prasad Institute of Research and Rehabilitation of Mentally Retarded (2001)

5.7 Work Education

Work education provides students with SEN studying at the secondary level an opportunity to understand the world of work and readies them for possible future careers. Obviously, everyone has to earn his/her livelihood by employment in appropriate work. The curriculum should provide for proper career counselling and also for training in pre-vocational skills. The pre-vocational skills include acquisition of work skills, awareness of work ethics, appropriate work habits, and responsibility sharing. Pre-vocational skills training should also include development and inculcation of

values such as honesty, punctuality, dignity of labour, respect for teamwork, and productivity consciousness. Students with SEN may take more time to adjust to the work setting, the work environment, their colleagues, and also to the idea of money management. Liaising between the world of work and education will also provide an opportunity to the employer to observe and suggest further improvements. This can also be an opportunity for students with SEN to get absorbed or to get selected for jobs while studying. This interface between the world of work and education will also help in changing the attitude of people in general and in creating awareness in society about students with SEN. In order to bring about effective liaising between the world of work and education, the curriculum should be in proper harmony with the demands and needs of the industry. In other words, the mainstream school curriculum should provide the facility of vocational streaming.

Students with SEN at the secondary and senior secondary level of schooling can be properly guided for a particular vocation in accordance with their abilities, aptitudes, and interest. The training required should be arranged as far as possible within the school compound or at a centre near the place of residence. The monitoring, follow-up, funding, and evaluation of the training should be the joint responsibility of the immediate family, the institution, government personnel, the NGOs, and the Panchayats.

5.8 Evaluation

The NCFSE (2000) was critical of the present evaluation system. Singhal (2004), studying the existing practices at the school level has stated that teachers regard the mainstream as curriculum-oriented and examination-driven, with pressures of "high achievement". She noted "teaching in India stands subordinated to examination and not examination to teaching." Thus, the focus is on the completion of a rigid and vast curriculum.

Quinn and Ryba (2000) have suggested collaborative forms of assessment for inclusive

Traditional Assessment	Collaborative Assessment
Based on a medical model	Based on an ecological model
Focuses on deficits within the student of the student	Focuses on abilities, strengths, and needs
Assessment procedures are unrelated to the curriculum and learning context	Assessment procedures are related to the curriculum and context of learning
Hierarchical expect model—there is inequality between the student and the 'examiner'	Team members are seen as equal in human dignity
One-shot assessment approach	Assessment is a continuous process
Student is viewed as passive recipient of assessment	Student is viewed as active participant and collaborator
Focus is on the learning products or outcomes achievements of the student	Focus is on the learning process and
The assessment is carried out by a specialist working in isolation	Parents and other relevant people are consulted and involved in the assessment.

classrooms. According to them collaboration between, and consultation with, the student, parents, caregivers, and other relevant people enable educators to gain a good understanding of the students' strengths and needs. They summarise the difference between traditional assessment methods and collaborative forms of assessment as shown in the table on the left.

Flexible strategies for assessment and accreditation have been recommended by the Open File on Inclusive Education (UNESCO, 2001). Appropriate assessment enables,

- Students who are talented and gifted to move at their natural learning pace.
- Students who progress more slowly than their peers to move at their own pace whilst still being part of the content of themes and lessons.
- Students experiencing specific learning problems to receive creative and effective support to maximise their success.

The open file gives examples from various countries with the following strategies:

- They break or weaken the link between assessment and progression.
- They relate assessment to broad objectives on which the curriculum is based rather than to the making of specified content.
- They develop flexible forms of accreditation.

5.9 Resources

Many students with SEN either go to regular schools or to special schools for education. There are others who, because of the severity of their conditions, are educated at home through community-based rehabilitation services. Finally, there may be some children enrolled in open learning or non-formal or alternative systems of education. Wherever children are enrolled, the crucial issue in the development practices is to meet the educational needs of children and this requires resources. The need for resources to facilitate effective teaching may vary from school to school. However, it is generally believed by teachers that they definitely require the resource support of a special educator to assist them in providing equal opportunities to students with SEN. For example, teachers teaching in classes having a few children with hearing impairment were of the opinion that:

> These children need to learn lip reading or sign language to communicate. We do not possess the skills to teach them these skills. In addition, we do not have the time in class to explain each and every concept and repeat whatever we have said. It is therefore important to have the support of a special educator, appropriate teaching learning material, space for their storage, etc. (Response of teachers from an integrated school, Pune, Maharashtra).

The teachers felt that since they are expected to spend all day teaching classes, very little time was available for such preparations. For successful inclusion, teachers require time for planning and discussion with other teachers, special educators, and parents, as well as for preparation of materials.

Other resources being used in mainstream schools include collaboration with special schools existing nearby. One very good example of this is the National Association For The Blind, an NGO, which runs a special school cum resource centre. This NGO has its branches all over the country. Not only does it provide residential facilities for students with visual disabilities right from a very young age, but it also integrates them in the general education system whenever it is appropriate for the child. It also provides resource support to the child throughout the school years and helps him/her in gaining access to the curriculum.

5.10 Staff Development

The effectiveness of the curriculum depends, in the long run, on the skills and attitudes of classroom teachers. The Open File on Inclusive Education (UNESCO, 2001) suggests that the following demands be placed on teachers from the perspective of inclusive curricula:

- They have to become involved in curriculum development at the local level, and they have to be skilled in curriculum adaptation in their own classrooms.
- They have to manage a complex range of classroom activities.
- They have to know how to support their students' learning without giving them predetermined answers.
- They have to work outside traditional subject boundaries and in culturally sensitive ways.

Sharma (2002) analysed the attitudes of teachers towards the disabled, how these attitudes relate to various background factors, and the ways of bringing about a change in the attitudes of teachers. She reported that:

1. The willingness of teachers to include children with SEN in the general class depended on the children's disabling conditions. Teachers had positive attitudes towards some children with specific disabilities like visual and hearing disabilities. Attitudes were least positive towards the intellectually impaired and those with behavioural problems.

2. The severity of problems in case of locomotor and intellectual disabilities negatively influenced their attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in their classroom.

3. The majority of the teachers felt the need for change in the school and classroom infrastructure.

4. The attitudes were found to be inversely related to the age and experience of the teachers teaching ordinary children. However, experience of working with the disabled was positively related to the attitudes of the teachers.

5. Female teachers were more positive towards the inclusion of the disabled in their classes than their male counterparts.

6. Science teachers had a more positive attitude towards inclusion than those teaching humanities subjects.

7. The higher the confidence in the use of teaching strategies, the more positive the attitude of the teacher towards the disabled.

8. All teachers reported that they needed more information on the types of disabilities, curriculum adaptation, educational implications, and skills and strategies required for meeting the needs of students with SEN.

Studying the teacher education curriculum of the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) from the perspective of learners with SEN, Julka (2004) has implicated a need for all Teacher Education Institutes to ensure inclusive education theory and practice strategies in their programmes. At present, there are no specific provisions in the form of trained teacher educators, resource materials, and standardised inputs on learners with SEN in the in-service programmes of the DIETs. In the pre-service programme, only one optional paper or one unit in a compulsory paper are the inputs provided. Training programmes under DPEP, and now the SSA, cover this component, but it needs to be strengthened and

made more relevant to the needs of the teachers from the perspective of inclusive education.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the major recommendations of this Focus Group.

- Make all early education and care programmes (from 0–6 years) sensitive and responsive to the special needs of children, including training of Anganwadi workers in identification of needs of the children with disabilities, use of age-appropriate play and learning materials and the counselling of parents.
- Make all schools inclusive by:
  - √ Enforcing without exception the neighbourhood school policy
  - √ Removing physical barriers
  - √ Reviewing barriers created by admission procedures (screening, identification, parental interaction, selection and evaluation), this should include private schools
  - √ Building the capacity of teachers to function in an inclusive setting
  - √ Making the curriculum flexible and appropriate to accommodate the diversity of school children including those with disability in both cognitive and non-cognitive areas
  - √ Making support services available in the form of technology (including ICT), teaching–learning materials and specialists
  - √ Involving parents, family, and the community at all stages of education
- Gear all teacher education programmes (both pre-service and in-service) to developing the pedagogical skills required in inclusive classrooms.

- Correlate the style of teaching to the learning styles of all children.
- Mobilise special schools as resource centres that provide support to inclusive schools.
- Develop partnerships with institutions of higher learning, governmental organisations, and NGOs to promote participation of children with disabilities in all aspects of education.
- Reduce class size to a maximum of 30 students and a maximum of 20 in case the class includes children with SEN.
- Make the class teacher responsible for all the children in the class. In case special support is required on account of SEN, this should be in the form of assistance to the class teacher.
- Regard all special teachers in a given school as full-fledged members of the school community.
- Make all curriculum-related policies and programmes inclusive in nature to effectively address issues related to the education of children with SEN.
- Develop perspective and skills in all administrators, including school principals, for planning and executing programmes based on the philosophy of inclusion.
- Develop strengths and abilities of all children rather than highlighting limitations.
- Recognising diversity among learners, the medium of instruction should include sign language for children with hearing impairment, and Braille for children with visual impairment. At the same time as an optional subject/third language, learning of sign language, Braille, finger Braille, etc. should be introduced for all children.

- To promote self-reliance and enable children to acquire coping skills, the emphasis of inclusive education must be on inculcating independent living skills, critical thinking, decision making and problem-solving skills, and articulation of their concerns.
- To facilitate the acquisition of integrated knowledge in children the single teacher class system up to Class V should be adopted.
- For effective delivery of education in the inclusive mode, all teacher education (in-service and pre-service) must be restructured.
- Education must aim at developing a system by which abstract concepts are effectively communicated to children with varying learning styles, including those using sign language, Braille, etc.
- To inculcate respect for diversity and the concept of an inclusive society the teacher education programmes and the curriculum framework should incorporate a component of human rights education.
- To nurture all aspects of the personality, viz., cognitive, affective, and connotative—games, dance, drama, music, and art and craft must be given equal importance and value.
- Admission, retention, and full participation of children in all aspects of education, must not be subject to any criteria based on assessment tests and judgment by professionals and experts, including psycho-medical certificates.
- No child with disabilities should be asked to produce certificates either for admission, examination, getting support facilities/scholarships, etc.
- Reject the policy of failing students vis-à-vis enabling each child to overcome perceived difficulties.

- Make sign language the medium of instruction for the hearing impaired and Braille for the visually impaired in view of the diversities.
- Introduce sign language, Braille, and finger Braille as a third language for all children.
- Inculcate among students with SEN, critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving and other coping or life skills in order to promote their self-reliance and independent living capabilities.
- Interpret SEN more broadly and do not restrict its interpretation to the definitions given in the PWD Act.
- Incorporate a component of human rights education in teacher education programmes to inculcate respect for diversity and the concept of an inclusive society.
- Do not subject the admission, retention, getting support facilities, scholarships, and full participation of children in all aspects of education, to any criteria based on assessment tests, judgment by professionals and experts, including psycho-medical certificates.

7. THE TASK AHEAD

For years the education system has provided special education and related services to students with SEN and systematically developed a dual service delivery system comprising different settings, different curricula, different services, and different service providers for students with and without SEN. But now in the context of the struggle to affirm and guarantee the rights of the disabled, the ethics of the dual system are being questioned. The common system, which would bring "all" onto a common platform, is being thought of as a better option.

It is, therefore, important to bring about a number of reforms at various levels in order to develop a "school for all" having an inclusive curriculum. The curriculum needs to be balanced in such a way that it is common for all, and yet takes account of the individual needs of all learners. It is also important to take into consideration pedagogical issues. The curriculum should be accessible to all children and for this specialist support would be required. Care then has to be exercised to ensure that learners with SEN are not segregated from the mainstream by providing this specialist support. How the school organises itself to be an effective school that takes care of the individual needs of all pupils is another issue to be considered. While being flexible in the timetable and delivery of the curriculum, the school should also provide for the resource support needed in the form of special educators, assistive devices, and teaching–learning material. The professional development of teachers and educators is an important issue and must incorporate attitudinal change, and the knowledge and skills necessary to lead to an inclusive society. Finally, no initiative towards inclusive education would be complete without collaborating with parents and without the external support of NGOs and special schools for providing inputs on training, curriculum delivery, assessment, etc.

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